

UN Resolution on the Rights of the Child

(Also called Omnibus Resolution)

The UN Resolution on the Rights of the Child is called an “omnibus” resolution because it can encompass all aspects of children’s rights: violence, poverty, HIV/AIDS, children in armed conflict, non-discrimination, etc.

The Third Committee is the body of the UN General Assembly that deals with human rights and social issues. It is composed of representatives of the 192 member states that are part of the United Nations. This means that each one of the 192 member states has a vote, and each vote counts.

The work of the Third Committee lasts from the first week of October (date to be announced) to the last week of November, during which all the resolutions pending are voted. Once adopted by the Third Committee, they go to the General Assembly for final adoption

The work plan of the Third Committee also includes many other resolutions. Since the Third Committee deals with human rights, their agenda also includes resolutions on the rights of women, of indigenous people, etc, for a total of more than 50 resolutions each year.

Of the five groups present at the UN (Western Europe and other states, Eastern Europe, Latin American and the Caribbean-GRULAC-, African States, Asian States) it is the EU and GRULAC who are in charge of drafting the text of the resolution.

EU and GRULAC take turns to start the drafting process year by year: one year GRULAC starts and once it has agreed a draft starts negotiating with the EU; the next year, the EU starts.

The country who starts the drafting process within either group is also the one which presents the resolution in the Third Committee, and the other group appears as primary co-sponsor.

All other countries that want to co-sponsor the resolution will join after these two groups have negotiated with each other and normally reached an agreed draft between them. The group which starts the drafting process has more power to shape the resolution the way it wants.

In 2007 the EU will take the lead on drafting the omnibus resolution. For the EU, the country that holds the Presidency during the second semester of the year negotiates on behalf of the whole group. Ms. Catarina Carvalho (First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations) on behalf of Portugal (holding the EU presidency in the second part of the year) will prepare the first draft of the resolution.

For the GRULAC, Uruguay will take the lead, as in 2006, s. Dianela Pi, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Uruguay to the United Nations).

Process of drafting the omnibus month by month

From April to June:

Portugal will start soon to have informal discussions with its EU colleagues and with some prominent Latin American members, like Uruguay, Argentina, and Brazil. In addition, Portugal already expressed strong interest in involving African countries early in the process,

The conversations will be informal, because the EU presidency is still with Germany until the end of June.

July

Portugal starts its semester as President of the EU.

Portugal will become more active. It will get in touch more often with EU colleagues, and with colleagues from the GRULAC, and from other regions - Africa, Asia.

Portugal is also keen to ask Professor Pinheiro for an early draft of the part of his report dealing with proposals for follow up (which was requested by last year's resolution).

Also, Portugal wants to have a meeting of the EU in Brussels to decide a common position on the resolution. It wants to avoid the disagreement that occurred last year. At the same time, it is also important for Portugal to maintain good relations with GRULAC and not alienate them from the process

August

Portugal will start drafting the resolution, taking into account not only last year's resolution, but also some of the paragraphs of the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Special Session on violence against girls.

Portugal will prepare the draft in collaboration with its EU colleagues.

September

Around the **2nd or 3rd week of September**, Portugal will have the first draft ready to distribute to its colleagues.

Once Portugal sends the draft out to the EU colleagues only, the other EU members start sending their feedback on the text

This process will continue until the **end of September**, when the draft with all the comments from the EU is it with all the comments taken account of in a revised agreed new draft will be send to GRULAC for their comments.

(last year though, there was no agreement on the draft, since the EU did not have a common position)

October

During the first week of October, the Third Committee opens its annual session. It is very likely that Professor Pinheiro will be asked to present his report on the follow up to the Third Committee.

From the 2nd to the 3rd week of October:

The drafting process reaches its peak. Portugal will discuss the draft with its EU colleagues, and with GRULAC. There will be continuous exchange of information and suggestions between the two groups. It is likely that the text will be also be shown to other countries, like Norway, Lichtenstein, Switzerland and New Zealand, which are always very active and engaged on children's rights

In the 3rd week of October

The text will be ready to be officially presented to the plenary of the Third Committee. From this point on, all groups are welcome to make suggestions and give feedback to the text. This is the time when each country can make comments and countries' opinion will be more visible and clear.

November

From the end of October until the third week of November: there will be informal meetings to discuss the text of the resolution.

What is an informal?

It is a meeting that interested parties hold to discuss the text and to present suggestions. They call it informal because it usually takes place in a small room, NGOs are not always invited, (even though we know the result of the meeting from our friendly sources) and representative are more prone to give suggestions or to declare their opinions on different paragraphs.

End of November, usually around November 23-24:

The resolution is ready, and it is presented to the plenary of the Third Committee, voted (if necessary), and approved.

December

All the resolutions are discussed again in a plenary session of the General Assembly. This process is mostly a formality; once the resolution has been voted and agreed upon in the Third Committee, it will be voted and agreed upon also by the General Assembly.

NB:

Although the governments' representatives at their Permanent Missions in NY make the final decisions, they have to follow the directions given to them by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in their capitals. This means that as much as a representative in NY understands and supports the need, for example, for a ban of all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment, or the importance of the SRSG, if his/her government is against a ban, the delegates in NY have to follow what the central government instructs them to do. Having said that, we can try and influence a state's position from both ends – by talking to the representatives in New York and getting them to try and convince the people in their foreign ministry or by talking to the foreign ministry and getting them to instruct their representatives.

Also, it is common for countries within the same region to vote in the same way. For example, even if the representatives of the Permanent Mission of Belize here in NY, support the recommendation to ban all forms of violence, including corporal punishment, they will not support the recommendation should there be a vote about the issue in the 3rd Committee: out of support for the other Caribbean countries, Belize will vote together with the Caribbean group.